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Walters: Strong CIA Still Serves Purpose

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Sun-Sentinel Writer

Gen. Vernon A. Walters, deputy director of the Central Intelligence Agency, expressed shock at yesterday's shooting death of an American ambassador in Beirut, and said the incident is a prime example of why America needs a strong intelligence gathering agency.

Walters, who addressed the Navy League in Fort Lauderdale last night, said he had just been informed a few hours earlier of the murder of U.S. Ambassador Francis E. Meloy and Robert Waring, his economic counselor.

"This is the second ambassador we have lost in a matter of two or three years," Walters said. "I think this is indicative of the anarchy and the winds of folly that are constantly blowing around the world we live in today."

Walters said world terrorism is operating today as "if it were a government, and it must be combatted as if it were a government."

"Maybe there is no central control over world terrorism, but it sure looks to me like there is an orchestra leader."

Walters said a strong intelligence gathering agency is the only means of guarding against a "nuclear Pearl Harbor," and he indicated that the series of Congressional investigations against the CIA and other intelligence agencies in recent months were being blown out of proportion.

"I cannot tell you that there were no abuses, that there has been no bad judgment," he said. "But we have to put this in its proper perspective."

Walters said there has been a lot of discussion about various CIA-inspired assassination plots and added "but there have been no assassinations."

He also said all of the break-ins conducted by the CIA have been against CIA employees who were suspected of taking classified documents.

But despite the adverse publicity against the agency, Gen. Walters indicated that the CIA has not overly suffered.

"We are getting four times as many young people applying for employment in the CIA now as in any time in our history," he added. "And while a small rate of people are leaving, it's not anything like you would expect from the hullabaloo that has been raised."



Staff photo by Donn Gould

DEPUTY CIA DIRECTOR GEN. VERNON WALTERS
... expressed shock at U.S. ambassador's murder